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ABSTRACT

A program to identify culturally-diverse adolescents with the potential of becoming gifted adults is described, and instructions for conducting theater activities are presented. "Talent Search and Development Model Project" of the New Haven Connecticut School System involves middle schools serving primarily Black and Hispanic (bilingual) students. The theatre and visual arts experiences are part of a developmental identification process to discover talent. Based on the assistance of the Center for Theatre Techniques in Education, activities are organized around four objectives: to develop a sense of community, to release imagination, to train concentration, and to sharpen awareness of environment. The developmental identification process involves initial screening, the theatre techniques program, and preparation for secondary school gifted and talented programs for students with demonstrated ability. The Torrance Test of Creative Thinking is used as one of the initial talent search screening measures, as well as a before/after measure of growth for the theatre techniques program. The Differential Aptitude Tests are a second screening instrument. To assist other school systems that wish to implement a similar program, this publication includes: information on organizing theatre sessions, including sample exercises; a Student Assessment Checklist to record the instructor's observations of the student's performance and rate of growth; and specific guidelines for replication of the model program. (SEW)

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U.S. Department of Education • Office of Gifted and Talented Model Project

Talent Search and Development in the Visual and Performing Arts

User's Guide

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EC 151625

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Talent Search and Development in the Visual and Performing Arts

User's Guide

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New Haven Board of Education: The Honorable Mayor Biagio DiLieto, The Reverend Edwin Edmonds, *Chairman,* Ms. Eleanor Zimmermann, *Secretary,* John Esposito, Ralph W. Halsey, III, Theodore F. Hogan, Jr., Ms. Julia Hamilton, Miguel Rodriguez.

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Talent Search and Development Model Project : User's Guide

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Foreward

It is surprising to see so many educators polarized in their views on identifying giftedness in children. At one extreme are those who believe that "talent will out", and all we have to do is stand by and allow it to reveal itself to the naked eye or ear. At the other extreme are those who insist that the only way to recognize giftedness is through formal testing. Of course, neither camp makes much sense, especially in relation to the rarely cultivated types of talent. For example, how can potential master stonecutters materialize naturally out of the shadows if hardly anybody ever practices it these days? How can such talent be diagnosed with formal tests among children who have never held chisels in their hands? Both the wait-and-see and psychometric approaches are inadequate for lack of an educational component that provides the necessary leavening for high potential.

The Developmental Identification Process recognizes the importance of education in identifying potential talent. It is an effective alternative to the aforementioned polarized views because it relies heavily on intervention through enrichment, its basic tactic being to examine how children mature while they are exposed to imaginative nurturance. As such, the benefits go far beyond identifying the gifted more effectively and efficiently. The centerpiece of the program is a kind of educational staging ground that challenges the gifted to reveal themselves by the way they respond to enriched learning opportunities. It is also designed ingeniously to elevate the quality of educational experience for non-gifted children, thus adding breadth to the scope and sequence. In other words, the basic program is comprehensive, appropriate for all children, and not restricted to benefit a special sub-group.

By the end of the staging period, the gifted not only reveal their identity but also disclose the kinds of special talents they possess that deserve specialized advanced nurturance. This preparatory program develops important compentencies in every child, with particular emphasis on skills that are often neglected in regular classrooms. It brings attention to social sensitivities, including leadership and followership, interpersonal understanding, and even elements of ethical conduct. It adds modes of expressiveness to the child's repertoire which, in turn, helps develop better self-awareness and self-concept. It also sharpens thought processes by bringing attention to the need for improving perception, insight, imagination, and creative venturesomeness.

Some may feel that the Center for Theatre Techniques in Education is benefiting socially disadvantaged children in order that they may have a supplement to conventional education. My own feeling is that The Center and its program are too important to be reserved only for the underprivileged. Withholding its work from other children would only amount to combatting one kind of underprivilege by creating another kind of underprivilege. This is *not* the way of democratizing education for *all* children.

Dr. Abraham Tannenbaum
Teachers College, Columbia University

"It is possible to understand the potential of developing skills for enhancing a person's life in the abstract, and yet not grasp the essential aspects of learning them."

Mary Hunter Wolf

Preface

The **Talent Search and Development** Model Project addresses the critical problem of identifying culturally diverse students in urban areas with the *potential* to become gifted adults. The focus is on the early adolescent years of 12 to 14 which represent a crucial stage of development. **Talent Search and Development** is a support program which provides opportunities to explore creativity through theatre and visual arts experiences, thereby uncovering and reinforcing budding areas of talent. The theatre techniques activities are part of a developmental identification process which begins with an initial screening and progresses to the subsequent phase of nurturing high potential into demonstrated ability.

This brief statement sets forth the basic intention of the program. Historically, the Gifted Education movement in the United States was formed in large part around the Terman studies and the testing designs used to determine intelligence level. Success in academic performance and high I.Q. scores provided significant and easily observed criteria for the recognition of "giftedness." Children outside the mainstream of society tended to be eliminated in such an identification of "giftedness."

This tendency to use "the Test" for identification at a given point in time denies the natural process by which giftedness emerges outside of formal education. Furthermore, in a complex technological society, "self-identification" becomes increasingly difficult for culturally diverse children because opportunities outside of the school structure are limited in socially comfortable access to adult mentors and cultural institutions that provide wider horizons.

Since 1966, the Center for Theatre Techniques in Education, with a staff of artists and teachers experienced in theatre and its related arts of music, visual arts, dance, and literature, has assisted educators in identifying and developing their own creativity in the art of teaching. The basis for the theatre techniques program evolved through this work. Activities were organized into objectives to develop and sharpen the individual's capacity in four areas:

- **acquiring flexibility in joining a learning community;**
- **enhancing powers of concentration;**
- **releasing individual imagination;**
- **sharpening awareness of the environment: the body and its surroundings.**

These practices with teachers were a composite of theatre techniques for training a beginning actor and educational practices in creative problem solving. Emphasis was placed on management of materials and exercises in "low risk" interpersonal communication.

The Center was encouraged by teachers and administrators in urban education to work directly with children at the critical middle school level. In New Haven, a pilot program was developed under Title VII (now Title VI ESAA) involving a random selection of seventh and eighth grade students. From this group, exceptionally gifted children emerged: children whose gifts had not been perceived in the classroom. This confirmed in practice the usefulness of theatre techniques for the *developmental identification* of giftedness.

An interesting and successful extension of the Model Project was developed with special funding from the Hazen Foundation. This extension applied the Center's approach to rural schools in Vermont and provided for interaction between the urban and rural students groups. The outstanding results are described in the booklet *The Urban-Rural Exchange: Exploring Two American Cultures through the Arts*. In addition, the techniques used in the Model have been successfully applied to the early identification of potential talent at the primary level in an adaptation funded by the Connecticut State Department of Education.

The Model is a refinement of objectives and design arrived at pragmatically. Evaluation and validation were carried on simultaneously with the actual practice. The results of a research study (Dixon, J.P., 1982) conducted during the 1979-1982 Model Project showed that students in the program achieved significantly higher scores on the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking than students in a control group.

In this Guide, we share our techniques in hope that adoption/adaptation of the Model will be forthcoming. The reader is urged to read closely the following chapters which expand on ideas briefly stated in this introduction.

Mary Hunter Wolf

Mary Hunter Wolf, Project Director
President, Center for Theatre Techniques in Education

I. The Talent Search and Development Model Project

History

The Center for Theatre Techniques in Education (C.T.T.E.) was established in 1966 as the educational arm of the American Shakespeare Theatre. In 1977 it was incorporated as a non-profit educational institution. Under the leadership of Mary Hunter Wolf, a theatre techniques program was developed and a variety of educational services were made available to schools and organizations locally and nationally. Since theatre encompasses all of the art forms, the programs used a multi-arts approach. The activities were designed to involve the whole individual in a creative learning process using the Arts as a base.

As these programs were conducted, several kinds of data were collected. A research study on the effects of theatre techniques showed that this program significantly increased the creativity level in a general population. (Rybczk, E.J., 1974). This was consistent with Torrance's research which showed that creativity could be enhanced through appropriate training. In addition, the theatre techniques trainers found in working with heterogeneous groups of students that some children showed exceptional talent which had never been observed before. From these findings, two conclusions were reached. First, the theatre techniques program can be used as a training program to enhance creativity for all students. Second, it is a process by which exceptional talent can be discovered and nurtured in students with high potential.

Based on these conclusions, C.T.T.E. applied for a Model Project grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Gifted and Talented. Model Projects were selected in several areas of Gifted and Talented Education to provide information and demonstrate innovative techniques. C.T.T.E. was awarded a Model Project grant in 1976-1979 as one of six national models and again in 1979-1982 as one of four national models.

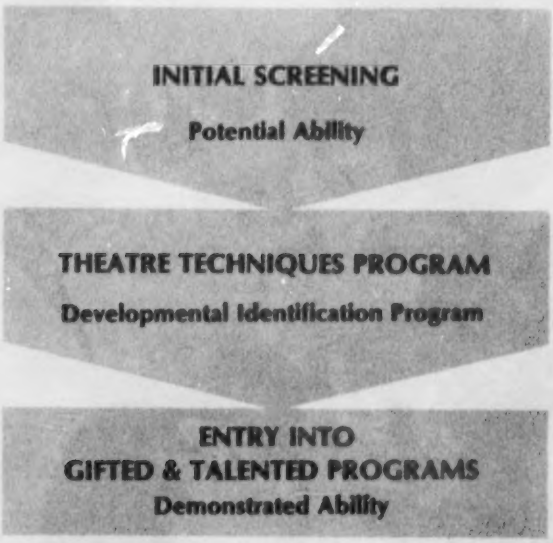
II. The Concept of Developmental Identification

In Theory

The identification of culturally diverse students who are gifted or talented is a problem which has challenged educators for many years. Many of the tests in use are based on items which reflect skills and cultural values that are unfamiliar to these students. To solve this problem, another approach to identification has been advocated by distinguished theoreticians in the field of education for the gifted. Torrance (1975) has worked extensively on identifying culturally diverse students who are gifted and talented. His findings in workshops for disadvantaged children indicate that observation of the students in a situation that allows for the expression of creativity is a far more effective tool for identification than traditional testing. Feurstein has also asserted that the usual kinds of psychometric testing are not appropriate to assess the abilities of many students. He has expressed a concern for uncovering the hidden potential of children rather than obtaining a measure of their present achievement level. This hidden potential is most readily assessed when the child is in a learning situation rather than in a testing situation (Narrol and Narrol, 1977).

Tannenbaum (1979) describes an approach which is similar to the Talent Search and Development Model. He favors a "funneling" process in which a large number of students are screened into a program followed by a "weeding out" process in which a smaller number of students are identified as gifted. Finally, a differentiation takes place among the students in which specific areas of ability emerge and higher skill levels are developed. C.T.T.E. places its focus for identification on an observation of performance over time rather than a standard test assessment. If standard tests are to be used to meet local conditions, these tests should be regarded as tools to assist in the larger process of observation.

Developmental Identification Process



In Practice

The Developmental Identification Process has three phases. The first phase is the initial screening which creates a pool of students who are likely to have potential talent. The second phase is the theatre techniques program which provides experiences to nurture the students from the stage of potential to demonstrated ability. This development occurs through a talent exploration program of multi-arts activities which enhance creativity and allows the students to grow at their own rate. The key concept in the developmental identification of students with potential talent is that the activities of the theatre techniques program are part of the process. The third phase is the entry into a program for students with demonstrated ability in the Arts or Academics. This system of developmental identification with its provisions for personal growth also bridges the gap between the recognition and the development of potential.

III. The Developmental Identification Process

The New Haven Connecticut School System served as a demonstration site for the Model Project. The city of New Haven is an urban area with a culturally diverse population. The **Talent Search and Development** Model Project was incorporated into the New Haven Comprehensive Talented and Gifted Program. The Model Project operated in two middle schools: the Jackie Robinson School with a primarily Black population, and the Roberto Clemente School with a primarily Hispanic population. At the elementary level, programs for the Academically Gifted begin at the fourth grade. At the high school level, programs begin at the tenth grade for the Academically Gifted, "The Independent Study and Seminar Program," and the Talented, "The Educational Center for the Arts."

The search for potential in the New Haven Schools has been conducted according to local needs and executed in conformance with state and local guidelines. In adopting sites, the target population and the instruments will vary according to the local situation but the process will remain the same. The students who had been identified as academically gifted on the basis of demonstrated ability were not included in the screening for students with high potential. The project staff also attempted to utilize the assessment data available through the New Haven Schools whenever possible.

Another variation of the developmental identification process involves the inclusion of an entire grade or a heterogeneous classroom in the theatre techniques program rather than conducting an initial screening to limit the number of participants at the outset. This variation has been utilized in small schools, with very young children at the second and third grade levels, and in rural settings where there are limited opportunities for talent development. Many people favor this approach because the theatre techniques program has been shown to enhance creativity in all students, to provide a strong sense of community within the group, to develop the powers of imagination and concentration, and to increase the awareness of the self and the environment — all valuable skills in improving learning capacity and achievement.

Stages of the Process

Phase I: Screening

Identifying potential high ability in a culturally diverse population is quite different from screening with standardized tests to identify students with demonstrated ability. The purpose of the preliminary screening procedures is to assemble a group of students who have the need for and capacity to benefit from a support program which would help them actualize their talents.

In the Model Project in New Haven the students who seemed most likely to have high potential were the creative children with good intellectual skills but who, at the same time, did not score high enough on achievement tests to qualify for a gifted program.

High creative potential was therefore selected as the first criterion for inclusion in the Model Project. Since the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking, Figural Form, had been administered to the seventh grade students in New Haven, the scores were reviewed for the students from the two participating Middle Schools who were not in the gifted program. A pool of 200 candidates with the highest T.T.C.T. scores was selected from this group. This pool of 200 represented approximately 50% of the eligible population.

A good intelligence level was the second characteristic deemed important for students to actualize their potential and move into a program for demonstrated ability. Thus, the second criterion was high intellectual potential. The problem of measuring *potential* intellectual ability in a culturally diverse population was apparent, particularly since this pool of 200 candidates had not scored in the highest academic group according to the tests in use. Therefore, it was important to use other indicators of ability which did not rely heavily on language skills because many of the students came from a bilingual Spanish population. The Abstract Reasoning Subtest and the Space Relations Subtest of the Differential Aptitude Test (D.A.T.) were selected. All 200 candidates were tested on the two D.A.T. subtests.

Using the Torrance Test scores and the D.A.T. subtest scores, a composite profile was developed for each candidate. Based on the strength of their composite profile, 60 students (30 from each school) were selected for participation in the second phase of the Model Project. Equal numbers of boys and girls were selected. Participation in the program was voluntary and the consent of both the student and the parent was sought.

Phase I: Screening Process

CRITERIA 1: HIGH CREATIVE POTENTIAL

All Seventh Graders
Not in Gifted Programs

CRITERIA 2: HIGH INTELLECTUAL POTENTIAL

200 Students
High Scores on T.T.C.T.
Figural Form

PARTICIPANTS

Highest Composite Profile
on D.A.T. and T.T.C.T.

Model Project

Phase II: Theatre Techniques Program

This phase consists of a two year support program. The first year is a talent exploration program which focuses on sharpening the senses and powers of observation, building individual and group resources, and conceptualizing. In the second year, thematic units which have grown out of the interests of the students are studied in depth utilizing mentors and practicing artists.

At each school, the program served 30 students and met twice weekly for 40 minutes per session throughout the school year. The instructors were a theatre techniques facilitator and one or more practicing artists who worked as a team to develop activities which utilized several art forms. The artists working with the bilingual Spanish population were both Hispanic and able to adapt the activities to the interests of the group.

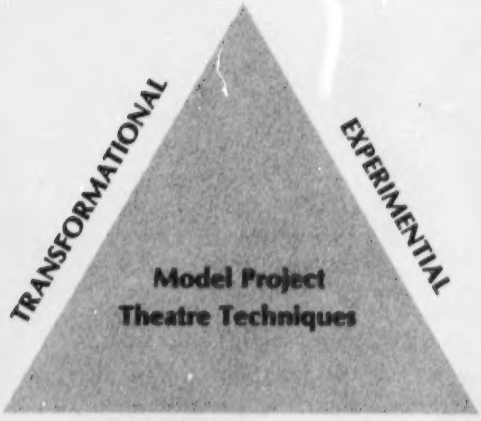
The program began with simple, low risk activities in an encouraging environment, and progressed to more complex, problem-solving experiences using several art forms.

Success is built into the activities in the early sessions so that students can enjoy satisfactions at different levels. Activities encourage the students to develop communication and problem solving skills. The quality of the growth process becomes an indicator of potential talent. Developmental identification is an on-going process.

The work and performance of the students was closely observed by the instructors and recorded at ten session intervals in order to chart the progression from potential to demonstrated talent. These observations were combined with a review of the products each student developed.

Conferences were scheduled with the regular classroom teachers to discuss whether any changes occurred in the behaviors the student displayed in the classroom. Classroom teachers were also trained through an in-service program on theatre techniques so they were able to integrate these activities into their curriculum and to recognize growth in their students. In conferences held at the end of the year, each student was asked to assess his progress, strengths and weaknesses, and to discuss his feelings about the program.

Types of Activities



1. **Developmental activities** involve sequences which begin with a few elements and increase in number and complexity until a large number of elements must link together to complete a task.
2. **Transformational activities** deal with one idea or theme which is expressed in many ways through a variety of art forms.
3. **Experiential activities** utilize the student's own experiences to encourage making decisions, organizing ideas and sequencing events.

The Torrance Test of Creative Thinking was administered to serve as a pre and post program assessment of growth.

At the end of the first year, all information was reviewed to assess the growth of each student. On the basis of this information, talented students were identified for participation in a more intensive training program during the second year to further nurture her or his talent and creativity.

The second year concentrated on a refinement of skills and an extension of the individual interests of the students. For example, one project developed and carried out by students was a video magazine in which several reports and commercials were produced in the style of the television program,"60 Minutes." Each student was able to select an area of interest from a multitude of options.

Other opportunities available were the pairing of students with mentors, a practice often cited as instrumental in developing highly gifted individuals. Students were also counseled on programs and scholarships available outside the school. Two examples were the placement of students in either a residential summer Arts program or a summer study skills seminar at Yale. Students were also counseled on possibilities at the high school level and encouraged to exercise their newly developed talents by applying for entry into programs for students with high demonstrated ability.

Objectives

The C.T.T.E. theatre techniques program is built around four objectives which inter-relate and are present in most activities. These objectives were developed by Mary Hunter Wolf.

Objective 1 — **To develop a sense of community**

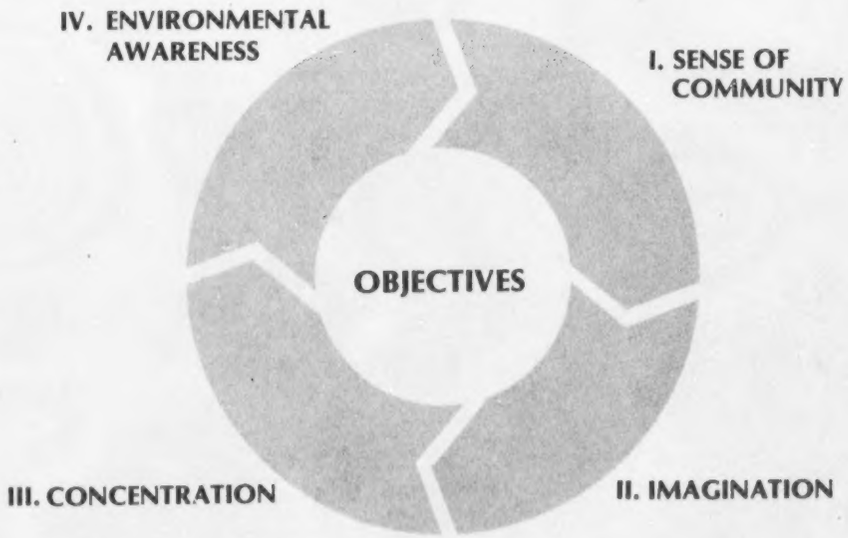
This sense of community will appear in the increased ability of the group to act on problems set before it, in the livelier relaxed manner with which these individuals interact, and finally in the willingness to share ideas and/or materials. The by-product of this atmosphere of community is designed to carry over into the group's normal day-to-day functions.

Objective 2 — **To release imagination**

This objective helps each member of the program reawaken his/her own imagination, discover its individuality, and to express and elaborate on original ideas. This reawakening will appear in each individual's willingness to contribute ideas, to explore problems more acutely and to risk more sensitive self-expression in the search for solutions.

Objective 3 — **To train concentration**

Each member of the group is introduced to, and begins to incorporate into the self, new ways to deepen the powers of concentration. Through practice, the individual will be able to bring forward a state of active "readiness" free from tension or distraction.



Objective 4 — **To sharpen awareness of environment**

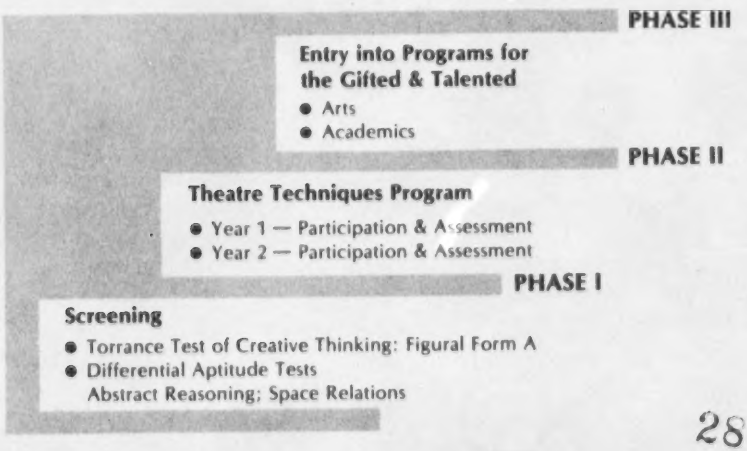
The objective of developing and sharpening environmental awareness has two parts: (1) the awareness of one's personal equipment — sensory experiences, sense of oneself in space and one's maximum physical extension and (2) outward relation to the outer world through sensory perceptions and awareness of significant elements in surrounding environments (the room, the school, the community). An individual should be enabled to move more expressively, employ the senses with greater awareness, and sharpen perceptions of the relationship between the self and the environment and its attributes.

The general goal of all theatre activities is to develop the capacity of each student to use personal resources to their full potential — to use the self as a learning and expressive instrument. This enhances the development of the thinking processes by helping the student develop several styles of learning and uncovers areas of special interest and talent.

Phase III: Demonstrated Ability

In New Haven, the ninth grade is a transition year during which the students prepare to apply for entry into a high school program for students of demonstrated ability. During this year, there are opportunities to work with mentors and periodic meetings with the C.T.T.E. staff and other Model Project students. Ideally, the preparation for the transition into the arts or academic program at the high school should take place during the second year of the developmental identification. This assures maximum support for the students and helps them bring their skills to the necessary level.

The last stage is entry into either an academically gifted program or a program for students talented in the arts. New Haven has two such programs: The Independent Study and Seminar Program and the Educational Center for the Arts. The I.S.S.P., which is academically oriented, provides counselors for students who have been identified as having special academic aptitudes. The counselors arrange a variety of special opportunities for the students including work with mentors who are experts in various fields, enrollment in courses on the college level, and participation in ongoing seminars coordinated by the counselors in areas of special interest. The second program option is E.C.A., which provides training in music, dance, theatre arts and graphic arts. Model Project students have successfully entered each type of program and made many unique contributions.


PHASE III
Entry into Programs for the Gifted & Talented
● Arts
● Academics
PHASE II
Theatre Techniques Program
● Year 1 — Participation & Assessment
● Year 2 — Participation & Assessment
PHASE I
Screening
● Torrance Test of Creative Thinking: Figural Form A
● Differential Aptitude Tests
Abstract Reasoning; Space Relations

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Stages of the Project

IV. The Theatre Techniques Activities

The Center For Theatre Techniques in Education has long recognized the strength of the visual and performing arts in uncovering potential talent. The **Performing Arts** can be seen as a way to investigate giftedness since the whole individual is called on to exercise a total absorption in the task, to understand the nature of the medium and to solve problems using all of the individual's resources. The **Visual Arts** provide opportunities for the maniuplation of materials, for decision-making and for concentrated observations. Theatre encompasses all the visual and performing arts.

In a relaxed, open and encouraging environment, the students have the opportunity to develop the special abilities stimulated by the theatre techniques program — the ability to generate new ideas, to concentrate on the completion of tasks, to communicate effectively, and to increase

awareness of what is happening around them. The students' progress in the development of these abilities is then observed. Those students who respond most successfully to the theatre techniques activities and who appear to be motivated to continue in the program are encouraged to continue for a full two years. Students who successfully complete the full program are then recommended to enter one of the regular programs for gifted high school students in the City of New Haven.

This chapter provides specific information on organizing the sessions and offers an introduction to theatre techniques activities. The illustrative exercises which follow are the tools the instructor uses to uncover exceptional ability. During the talent exploration phase, student performance and rate of growth is closely monitored through recording the instructor's observations on the Student Assessment Checklist.

The Organization of the Session

The divisions reflect the basic organization of a typical session: a Warm-up leads into the Main Activity and a Cool Down brings the session to completion.

The Warm-up sets the tone for a session. It brings you and the students into interaction with each other and with certain parts of your own natures that you might not use consciously during other parts of the day. Warm-ups also bring you into contact with the space around you. They serve as the transition which moves you from the place you've been to the place you are now.

A Main Activity is chosen and developed with consideration of many of the same questions we ask when selecting Warm-ups: basically, who are we? where are we now? where do we want to go from here? A Main Activity, by its nature, has a particular focus and specific goals. It is always important that each student participate in the group effort. It also focuses on skills in one or more of the arts areas; the activity may begin with a focus on one art area and then switch into, or interact with, another art area as it develops. Almost any Main Activity can be expanded by expression in another art form and can reach a further maturity when directed into a theatre context, which embraces all the art forms.

An important part of every session is what happens in the last fifteen or twenty minutes. We call this time a Cool-Down. Cool-Downs are crucial for developing a consciousness about the day and the progress made, about the problems faced, the successes and failures, and about where the group is headed.

Shape the Session

Choose open, uncluttered space large enough for 25-30 students to move in freely. Have free-standing, sturdy chairs without arms available. Students and instructor should wear comfortable, loose clothing with soft shoes or barefoot. (Girls — preferably, jeans or slacks.)

Always begin your session with a whole group activity of a physical nature (Warm up) standing in a circle. Session should be at least 40 minutes. Ideal — 2 periods back-to-back. Vary activities from standing to sitting at appropriate intervals and from combinations of two partners, small groups of 5 or 6, or whole group. Each day should contain a "main activity" requiring around 15 minutes to execute.

Beginning of each session — **Warm up** (5 minutes) with simple stretching, relaxing, "shake out" exercises. End each session with a "cool down," gathering group together for seated discussion, reviewing

accomplishments of the session, answering questions, referring briefly to next meetings, pickup and put away (5 to 10 minutes). Do not praise or blame individuals.

Exercises

Early exercises should feature working together in "low risk" situations concentrating on "building a learning community."

Warm-up:

Time: 5 minutes maximum

Description: Group in standing circle. *Random stretching* out and *contracting* while standing in place. Add big sounds for big stretch, little sounds for contractions to accustom students to use of voice as if it were a "muscular" part of the body.

Random walk:

Time: 5 minutes maximum

Description: Moving briskly and silently, fill empty spaces as they appear while group moves about room.

Ordering:

Time: 10-12 minutes maximum

Description: Have students arrange themselves in a straight line alphabetically by first letter of first name as rapidly as possible. When complete each student steps forward in order and with a bold gesture, announces her/his name to the world.

Introductions:

Time: 15 minutes maximum

Objectives: Concentration, Identification

Description: Students in seated circle on floor. Choose a starting point. If students know each other, each invents a first name; if they do not, use real names and choose favorite food. First student turns to person on right and says, "I am Orlando and I like pizza." Second student turns to student on right and says, "I want you to meet my friend Orlando who likes pizza. I am Susan and I like orange juice." And so on around circle until last person gives all names and foods and own name and food. Group should try to succeed and may help each other if necessary by giving clues. At the end, mix up positions and ask students at random who is now on your right or left.

Survival:

Time: 15 minutes

Objectives: Concentrated observation. Imagination.

Description: Students seated in pairs facing each other. Each observes the other for 10 counts. Turn back to back and each makes 3 visible changes in appearance. When all ready, turn back to partner and identify changes in turn. Again back to back and make eight *different* changes. Turn back and identify. Discuss with group moment when you could not think of anything and then something popped into your head. This is the *seed* of the creative moment in its simplest form. You succeed when you trust your imagination and waste no energy agonizing. Ask for personal experiences when imagination "came to the rescue."

Cool down:

Time: 5 minutes

Description: Discussion on imagination (the creative leap) should lead into brief projection of focus for next few sessions:

- Getting to know each other and work together
- Working on developing imagination and concentration
- Answer questions

Above is an example of early sessions. As group becomes a responsive and responsible unit, move into more complex exercises for the "main activity" of each day.

Concentration:

Materials: five similar objects, pencils, crayons, or Cuisinaire rods

Time: 20 minutes maximum

Description: Divide into small groups, no more than five. Instructor grasps objects as in *Pick-up-Sticks* and allows them to fall out in random design in center of group. Each individual silently observes objects, fixing pattern in memory for 30 seconds. Instructor gathers objects and hands them to a student who then tries to replace them according to best recollection (allow 1 minute). Others watch without any comment. Person to right makes corrections as he/she perceives necessary. No comment from observers. Continue around group back to first person who makes changes back to own first impression if needed or accepts new arrangement as more accurate. Discussion: Draw all groups together. How did you "see" arrangement in order to remember it? How did you react to criticism? How staunch were you in sticking to your first

impressions? Elicit as much sharing as possible. Raise questions such as: Did you see design in relation to floor pattern underneath design? Did you calculate individual objects in relation to each other? Did you lift it in your mind's eye into space without reference to setting? Point out the value of learning as much as you can about your own way of successful concentration and "self-observation" as an ongoing learning experience. Ask if difference in perception might not arise from the "point of view" from where observer sat.

Other main activities:

Numbers Game:

Materials: one chair for each player

Time: 30-45 minutes

Goals: 1. to increase the student's abilities to concentrate

2. to listen and pick up on the cues given by other people

Description: The group is seated in chairs in a circle. One person is number 1; going clockwise around the circle, each person numbers consecutively until all have numbers.

Number 1 starts the game by calling, out loud, any number she chooses (she must call a number that is within the number of people playing). The person whose number has been called answers by calling another number; that person calls another number. Continue with the numbers until someone makes a mistake, either by not answering at all, by calling his own number, or by calling a number not contained in the group. The person who makes the mistake now moves to the last chair and becomes the largest number in the circle. Everyone moves counter-clockwise down one seat until the seat vacated by the person who made the mistake is filled.

Example: Number 12 is dreaming about lunch and does not answer when 12 is called. 12 now moves to the last seat which is 26. 26 moves to be 25, 25 becomes 24 all the way down until 13 fills 12's seat. All these people now have the number of the new seats they are sitting in. The people below 12, such as 11, do not move; they stay in the same chair and they keep their numbers.

Variations: "The President's Game": Chairs 1 -4 also can be called by their titles: #1 is the President, #2 is the Vice-President, #3 is the Secretary, and #4 is the Treasurer. They must answer to either their number or their title. This adds a little more drama and intricacy to the game.

Airport:

Materials: blindfold and "obstacles" (shoes, chairs, coats, whatever is around)

Time: 15 - 20 minutes +, depending on number

Goals: 1. to sharpen senses other than sight
2. to give and receive clear verbal directions
3. to develop a sense of shared responsibility

Description: Choose one person to be the Pilot, another to be the Air Traffic Controller. The rest of the players become the Runway by forming two lines facing each other, with about eight feet between the lines. Obstacles are placed on the Runway.

The Controller is at one end of the Runway and the blindfolded Pilot is at the other. The Controller verbally guides the Pilot down the Runway so that the Pilot avoids the obstacles and contact with the sides of the Runway.

If players goof, they don't lose their turn; they just try again. After the Pilot lands, reverse the roles of Pilot and Controller. Give everyone a turn at each role.

Variation: Try two Pilots and two Controllers working simultaneously.

Sculptures:

Materials: none

Time: 15 - 30 minutes

Goals: 1. to experience the variety of ways in which the human body can be moved and shaped

2. to learn to work together

Description: One staff person directs all of the action. Two people are chosen or volunteer, and they stand before the group. One person is the Sculptor and the other is the Clay. The Clay does not move but remains soft and pliable; the Clay cooperates with the Sculptor as the Sculptor shapes the Clay.

One at a time each student changes one thing about the Clay, e.g. raising an arm, closing the eyes. This is done silently with the Sculptor guiding and positioning the Clay. The Sculptor does not do anything to Clay he would not want done to himself.

From time to time change the person who is the Clay. After a few rounds, add a second person to be Clay. This can continue until several people are Clay.

Variations:

1. Ask the Sculptors to sculpt the Clay into a scene of some sort, e.g. mother and child, two people hunting. The people not used in this vignette guess what has been created.
2. Have one Sculptor create one piece of Clay in a position that makes a strong statement. Other Sculptors add their creations until a whole theme or scene is portrayed.
3. After a group has created a sculpture they freeze. The first person (the person who began as the first piece of clay) moves carefully out of the piece, goes to a large piece of paper, chooses a color, and paints a mark or shape to express how the body was while in that sculptored pose a moment before. The rest of the students follow one at a time, in the order in which they joined the piece, and add their line and color to the painting of the sculpture. These paintings can then be used as the form from which another group creates a sculpture.

Note: This exercise works best in a circle so that all can see; staff persons can begin as Sculptor and Clay so that students get warmed up and comfortable. Once the activity is moving, the possibilities are limitless.

When class seems ready, move into improvizations which should begin with material drawn from group.

Waiting-For:

Materials: none

Time: one half hour

Goal: to develop basic theatre skills, concentration and participation.

Description: Divide into small groups (three to six). Each group chooses a place and characters: the focus is that something is being "waited for." (Everyone in the group must have a role and the situation must be clear enough that the audience will, after a few moments, be able to understand what it is that is "being waited for.") The scenes are done without talking.

After the groups have had time to rehearse their scenes, each group gets up in front and performs their scene. As soon as a member of the audience thinks he knows what the scene is about, he joins in as a character appropriate for that situation. For example, one group chooses a situation in which there is an accident and the people in the scene are waiting for an ambulance. A member of the audience who understands this can pantomime driving up and being the doctor.

Variations:

1. After people have joined in, let dialogue begin and see what happens.
2. Have a scene that follows from the first. For example, in the accident scene talked about above, another group can be the surgical team waiting at the hospital, or the family at home waiting for the "victim" and not knowing about the accident.

Note: There is a tendency on the part of the students to want to cut the scene off as soon as they understand what is being acted out. Encourage them to join in, to think of other people who might enter the scene. Sometimes, the entire group might eventually be involved in one scene. Encourage people to take a chance joining in. It's fine to be "wrong"; this often leads to interesting and comic results.

Extend these scenes into plotted story to be improvized and developed into "vignettes" carried out as far as instructor deems suitable.

Shadow play:

Goals: concentrated observation, character through physical form, elaboration

Description: Divide group in two. In one half each has a mirror partner. Each individual in first group invents a person of any age or

profession and walks at random around room silently in that character, choosing a characteristic way to walk or move. Mirror partner moves along side trying to "get into" person portrayed by careful imitation. When copying characterization seems well established, each group, originators and mirrors, gathers together and out of hearing range tells who he or she is to own group. Originators tell their chosen personalities, mirrors guessing as best they can who they *think* they are. Each group creates a scene in which all the group characters might interact in a simple event. Each group rehearses its own scene and presents it to the other group — but mirror must go first. Each originator must watch his/her mirror closely. After both groups have presented — *choosing any form the group agrees upon* — comic strip, pantomime with narration, silent movie or short acted out vignettes, etc. the following discussion should take place. Originators and mirror should discuss privately their responses to each others' embodiment of character and their choices. Then the discussion can be shared by the entire group. At this point, discussion can address many aspects of observation — the difference between "noticing" without "doing" and actually trying to reproduce with my own body what the other "body" is doing. How much did I learn about my character without words? It is useful to point up the fact that there is no absolute "right" answer. It may be more important to grasp the "essence" of a character rather than know if he or she is old or a policeman or in pain. Were those "essential" elements well chosen by the originators, did the mirrors use them in a new way — making a different but satisfying use of those essentials?

This particular exercise can be an open door into how the form the presentor selected was chosen. Can this form be a solid base for development from improvization to written and rehearsed form? Does it take on a life of its own in which the first step of copying was only the "springboard"?

In developing a theatre techniques program, the teacher is devising an environment which acts as potting soil for budding talent. The gradual emergence and growth of potential is a natural flowering process which can only be achieved if the teacher is sensitive to the nuances of the individual student's development and the appropriate pacing and planning of exercises. The most effective way to understand this process is to be involved as a participant. Through this experimental approach to talent identification, many teachers have reported gains in their own creativity and self confidence and have initiated similar programs in their own school system.

V. Adoption of the Model

"Talent Search and Development" was funded as a U.S. Model Project in Gifted and Talented Education to provide information and training on how to institute a program to identify potentially high ability students and to help them actualize their ability. Through the dissemination program, national, state and local groups have been trained in the developmental identification procedures and many school districts throughout the country have adopted all or part of the Talent Search and Development Model into their existing program for the Gifted and Talented.

The following steps serve as a series of guidelines which have proven helpful to districts implementing the Model. They should be regarded as suggestions rather than a fixed formula.

Assemble an Advocacy Group for the Search for Potential

The first step is to assemble a nucleus group of concerned parents, teachers and policy makers. Advocates can be located through the Board of Education, the school system, Consultants in the State Department of Education, and the State and local Arts Organizations. This group can become an advisory board and begin to examine funding sources from the state, local, or private sector. They can also build support for the introduction of a talent search component in existing programs for the Gifted and Talented.

Contact the Model Project

Send for dissemination material on the Model Project to share with the Advocacy Group. Visit the Model Project demonstration program. The Advocacy Group can receive valuable support in its organizational stage through technical assistance by the C.T.T.E. staff.

Establish a Planning Group

From the school district, assemble a group of key people who will design and develop the pilot program. Include the person who might become the staff coordinator, a supportive principal whose school might house the program, artists, classroom teachers, advisory board members, and at least one person in a position to effect decisions.

Design Pilot Program

Using the State guidelines and the school district's plan for Gifted and Talented Education as a base, design a component to discover and nurture potential talent. The Talent Search and Development Model Project will provide a structure which can be adopted. Consultation is available from the C.T.T.E. staff during the design stage to develop a program to meet local needs. The developmental identification of potential talent should lead into programs for students with demonstrated ability in the Arts or Academics to provide continuous support.

Target Population

The target population in the search for potential can be urban or rural, early elementary or middle school age, depending on the needs of the local district. The developmental identification model has been successfully adapted to many populations.

Staff

The program facilitator should be selected and trained. C.T.T.E. conducts training programs on the use of the techniques and on instituting a developmental identification program. Community resources, such as museums, art galleries, local theatres, display firms, advertising agencies, etc. should be explored as well as individual artists and technicians identified.

Orientation

The orientation sessions with the community, staff, and parents are essential to insure an adequate understanding of the goals of the program and to develop a shared plan to nurture potential. The C.T.T.E. staff is available to conduct workshops along with the local staff who will be responsible for the program. These awareness workshops usually consist of an overview of the developmental identification process which describes the phases of the initial screening of students who seem to have high potential, the two year support program to identify and nurture talent, and entry into a program for students with high demonstrated ability. Examples of classroom activities are used to demonstrate the theatre techniques program and to illustrate the objectives.

Evaluation

Close monitoring of student growth is essential in the developmental identification process. A behavioral checklist is filled out after every ten sessions to provide a profile of each student. Student products are also included and this profile is shared with the staff and parents.

Program evaluation is also conducted through a comparison of scores on pre- and post-program testing with the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking.

Program Refinement and Expansion

By the end of the first year, the local program should have field tested all the elements of the pilot design outlined by the planning group. The planning group should now refine the design based on the result of the first year, local needs, the unique characteristics of the target population, the community resources, and staff strengths. An expansion design should be developed for the second year of programming with the students. The second year of programming will complete the developmental identification process. A new group of students should be screened and admitted for the first phase of the program using the revised program design.

The following are the essential elements to be kept in mind and utilized at appropriate times: **People** — artists and art organizations, opinion makers both in and outside the educational community, concerned parents and educators; **money** — corporate and foundation support, school budgets (local and state block grants), local, state and national private giving; **power** — that is by whom and where are program decisions made; **timing** — time allotments for gathering initial support, planning in relation to effective start up time; and **public relations** — when and how to present ideas for impact and follow-up.

A key element in initiating and maintaining a successful program is communication with the groups the program impacts. Awareness and training workshops for teachers and community leaders, individual conferences, and press coverage are all important activities to stress during the pilot year in order to develop and maintain a network of people working toward the goal of actualizing potential talent.

VI. Conclusion

It is possible to understand the potential of developing skills for enhancing a person's life in the abstract, and yet not grasp the essential aspects of learning them. The most important aspects of involvement take place at a basic level of feeling and need. Learning new ways of responding and adapting to environments can be regarded as a process similar to that which an infant experiences — a gradual sorting out of the meanings and patterns in order to develop into an appropriately responsive being.

Though developmental identification of giftedness might well begin at an earlier state, in urban and rural settings the middle or junior high school grades and the first year of high school are critical. In these years, many urban children often turn away from formal schooling. If they are not succeeding in conventional academic terms the sense of inadequacy can become paralyzing and they turn to other sources to satisfy their needs to mature often neglecting or abusing their talents.

Entry into high school can be a time of crisis in which the waste or misdirection of potential abilities takes over. The Model is aimed at this population. In many cases, programs for "demonstrated" gifted are in place at the high school level but the student with undeveloped potential is likely to be excluded. No one has expressed it better than Langston Hughes in his poem—

"What happens to a dream deferred;
Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore —
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over —
like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?"

This is a question which society can no longer afford to ignore.

Appendices

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Publications

For More Information On:

	Price
Theory	
Developmental Identification of the Gifted	$2.00
Curriculum	
Bananas	5.00
Adoptions of the Model	
The Urban-Rural Exchange	2.50
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Sources for readings on the Visual and Performing Arts	1.00

To Order Publications, Write to C.T.T.E., 1850 Elm St., Stratford, CT 06497
Make check payable to C.T.T.E. Payment must accompany order.

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TALENT SEARCH & DEVELOPMENT STUDENT ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Name _____ Instructor _____

Month_____ Day_____ Rating No._____ School Year_____

Number of last ten sessions attended_____

On the sixteen items below *circle the one number* which best indicates a position for this child. A rating of one (1) is the lowest possible and is associated with the negative descriptions on the left. A rating of eight (8) is the highest possible and is associated with the positive descriptions on the right. The other ratings (2 through 7) represent positions between; four (4) and five (5) are middle ratings halfway between no competence and extreme competence. The two end ratings (1 and 8) are intentionally extreme in order to help assure variation in ratings and to assure that when very exceptional performance does occur, it can be distinguished. Since descriptions like "highly", "often", and "exceptionally" can easily shift in meaning from one group context to another and from one time to another, the extreme positive rating of eight (8) should be associated with the qualities of behavior of gifted adults. Examples of such people (successful playwright, good teacher, etc.) are a part of each positive description. These examples provide a reference point which will remain more stable for a given rater over time and in different situations. It is not expected that a child will demonstrate the technical competence of such gifted adults. Rather, the items ask whether a child possesses the qualitative aspects of the behavior of such people (effective communication, supportiveness, etc.)

1) Made no effort to communicate ideas, directions and feelings to others	Communication 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Highly effective in communicating ideas, directions and feelings to others (like a successful playwright)
2) Did not support and encourage others at all	Support of Others 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Often encourages and supports many others in the accomplishment of group tasks (like a good teacher)
3) Extensively inflexible in leader-follower roles, needing to dominate others or needing to be dominated by others or vascillating between the two extremes	Leader-Follower Flexibility 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Highly flexible in taking the lead in a course of interaction when it is appropriate and following the lead of others when that is appropriate (like a good actor)
4) Extensively restricted and cliquish in deciding who to interact with in group tasks	Interaction Flexibility 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Exceptionally willing to relate to and interact with a great variety of other people (like a sensitive anthropologist)
5) Shows no awareness of what other people are feeling	Awareness of Feelings of Others 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Is exceptionally aware of what other people are feeling (like a good counselor)
6) Is unattending to the behavior of others or often misses its significance	Perception of Others' Behavior 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	In a group context is exceptionally perceptive of the significance of the behavior of others (like a good actor)
7) Exhibits either very tense or very uncontrolled behavior so that the body is not used as a well directed resource	Body Command 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Shows exceptionally free and agile body command (like a good gymnast)

8) Shows no interest in events of the world outside the school and neighborhood	Awareness of the Wider World 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Shows exceptional interest in events of the world outside the school and neighborhood (like a good investigative journalist)
9) Was constantly distracted by things peripheral to the activity at hand	Focusing 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Shows exceptional ability to focus on the activities at hand (like a good tennis player)
10) Gave up on most tasks at an early stage	Completion of Activities 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Is exceptional in the capacity to stay with a task until it is successfully completed (like a good novelist)
11) Has difficulty shifting focus from one task to another while participating in activities	Flexible in Focusing 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Shows exceptional ability to shift from one point of focus to another in a task (like a successful administrator)
12) Shows delay or avoidance in entering most activities.	Immediacy of Response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Shows exceptional ability to initiate activities without delay or avoidance (like a good emergency room physician)
13) Has no sense of the possibilities in the use of objects and space	Creative Use of Objects 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Uses objects and space in exceptionally creative ways (like an imaginative architect)
14) Stays within the most obvious confines of problems as given	Independent Approach to Problems 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Shows constructive and exceptional independence in deciding how to proceed with a problem (like an imaginative poet)
15) Gives very common, expected, ordinary responses to activities	Unique Responses 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Responds to most activities in very unique ways (like an artist)
16) Shows no tendency toward elaborating beyond simple, initial responses	Creative Elaboration 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Generates exceptionally many details in response to activities (like a successful novelist)

SPECIAL COMMENTS

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